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## FIRST ANNUAL FLOWER SERMON.

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND DANIEL S. TUTTLE.

St. Matthew, 6:28.

“Consider the lilies of the field.”

In the will of the late Mr. Henry Shaw provision was made for the preaching of an annual sermon upon “The wisdom and goodness of God, as shown in the growth of flowers, fruit and other products of the vegetable kingdom.”

It is well known what a deep interest Mr. Shaw took, when living, in flowers and plants; and that the resources of his large estate have been left, in the main, to secure the sustentation and perpetuation of the “Missouri Botanical Garden.”

At the request of the Board of Trustees of the Garden, I am here to preach the first sermon under the provisions of the will.

In this age it is not to be denied that utilitarianism is dominant. “For what good?” and “Will it pay?” are pertinent questions put to the front. Thoughtful people will admit that dangers to our true happiness and our best culture lie in the path of such excessive devotion to the immediately useful. Therefore, by such thoughtful ones the value will be quickly recognized of a munificent bequest that goes not to give bread to the hungry or garments to the shivering, but for the care and growth of trees and plants and shrubs and flowers.

In two places in the text of the will, the goodness and wisdom of God as manifested in the vegetable kingdom is set down.

Now I regret to say that I am not a botanist and I have no special qualifications fitting me to call your attention and guide your thoughts along the way of observing how the wonders of the vegetable world exemplify the Divine Benevolence. Yet I may be permitted to suggest some considerations to minds and hearts that are willing to hear and heed them.

The whole world of sight and sense and action predicates God, and argues the wisdom and goodness of God. The complicate interplay of the forces of Nature, the wonderful adaptation of the functions of animal life, the developments by cells, the orderly and helpful transmutations of energy, send unfailingly the observant mind to thoughts of the Maker and Ruler, God. "He that planned the ear, shall he not hear? or he that made the eye, shall he not see?" "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." By Paley, a hundred years ago, this argument from design for those who think and read in English was put with singular clearness and force. And the marvelous forward strides made since in Natural Science, with the numerous discoveries lighted upon in the investigations aroused by the modern theory of Evolution, have furnished tenfold more of data than Paley had for inferring from design the existence of the designer. It may not be amiss to remind Christian folk that the hypothesis of Evolution is now upon trial and under experiment. It may go up higher into the law of Evolution, explaining all forms of existence and modes of sequence—even human animal life. If so, all right. It will be found not only not to militate against either the Holy Bible or the Christian Creed, but even to contribute to our deeper reverence for the God who makes the glories and immensities of the Universe to be but His unfoldings out of the simplicity and energy of a cell. It may go down into the darkness of an exploded hypothesis. If so, yet in the studies it has induced and the truths it has searched out, it will have proved itself exceedingly beneficial to mankind.

Marks of design everywhere apparent argue the existence of the designer, God. Wisdom and goodness in the things designed argue these to be the attributes of Him designing. Nor is the argument to be refused because of things of evil seen and known, like thistles, nettles, thorns, rep-

tiles, noxious insects, poisons, volcanoes, cyclones, sin. For some of these are changed into good. As poisons into medicines. And some exist as opportunities and stepping stones to good. Even sin itself in its existence helps furnish the sphere for the life and growth of the precious forces of choice and free-will. And any way things that we may deem unwise and bad in the world are overwhelmingly outnumbered and overmastered by things we know to be wise and good. "If I climb up into heaven thou art there; if I go down to hell, thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there also shall thy hand" of wisdom "lead me, and thy right hand" of goodness "guide me."

Looking out upon the world and its three great kingdoms that from childhood we have been accustomed to divide things into, viz., the mineral, the vegetable, and the animal, only a little thought is necessary to discover the paramount importance and interest of the one named the vegetable. Wood for fuel, and timber for houses and furniture; grains and roots and fruits for food, and flax and cotton for clothing — these show at a glance how this kingdom pays superabounding tribute for the support and comfort of man. And considering that the stored up coal of the earth that we call a mineral is of vegetable origin, and that grasses and corn sustain the herbivorous animals that he takes for food, and grass and mulberry leaves nourish the sheep and goat and silkworm, whose products he takes for clothing, and that a large portion of the curative substances of the *materia medica* is gathered from herbs and trees, we shall conclude that it is the vegetable world which by God's appointment really furnishes well nigh everything for the life and happiness of the natural man. And one understands the phrase often uttered to me by the dwellers in the Far West when I was among them — "When I make this strike or that: when I achieve this success, or that I am going to get out of here and go back to God's country." Out, it meant, from the treelessness there and the dry sand and the

gray sage brush and the brown coloring and where grasses rarely mat themselves into sod or sward, back to the trees of groves and woods, back to lawns and meadows, and where God makes green "grass to grow upon the mountains," and "herbs" and fruits "for the use of men." Is it any wonder that the imaginative Greeks peopled their forests with the Dryad nymphs making their lives to be a very part of the life of the trees, and in their metamorphoses changed the noble youth Narcissus into the flower, and the beautiful maiden Daphne into the laurel shrub?

Our Blessed Lord gave honor to the vegetable world. It is a sweet touch of His sympathy with the innocent pleasures of men, that when He miraculously fed the five thousand he commanded them, tired as they were with much walking and long fasting, to sit down upon the grass. "There was much grass in the place," says one evangelist. It was "green grass" says another. Whose heart cannot gratefully respond to the tender touch of loving kindness in the Master, as He bids, sit down upon the grass? Again and again He enforces His teaching by illustrations drawn from vegetable nature. The sower going forth to sow,—the seed springing up one knoweth not how,—the mustard growth,—the wheat and tares,—the vine and vineyard over and over again,—the barren fig tree,—the other fruitless tree cumbering the ground and deserving to be cut down,—these indicate that the Divine eye looking forth takes in the truth and gives it out again, that the vegetable world of God's appointment is well known by man, and intimately associated with him, and wondrously helpful to his life and development. And one may be permitted to remark that when our Lord institutes the Holy Sacrament for the ever to be continued memorial of His sacrifice upon the Cross, He takes from the vegetable kingdom the typical elements, strengthening bread and cheering wine, and passes by the animal kingdom, altho' the blood and flesh of a lamb had constantly done service in the sacred Paschal rites precedent. On a mountain, or what we would call a

hill, near Capernaum, He delivers His wonderful Sermon on the Mount, and looking down along the slopes to the Sea of Galilee He observes the profusion of beautiful wild flowers carpeting the earth. He is telling His disciples of the wisdom and goodness of God. He has just framed for them that sweetest of prayers, "Our Father who art in heaven." He is in a land of flowers. Palestine, it is said, has 2,500 species of flowering plants, twice as many as in all Great Britain. He says to His disciples, look out upon the flowers. They brighten the fields. They please the eye. They cheer the spirits. They sweeten life. And be not content with looking, but "Consider the lilies of the field," consider them thoughtfully and learn from them. The Father in heaven provides the beautiful flowers. They toil not for a living—as you and others do—you, Peter and Andrew and James and John in fishing, and Matthew at the money counter, and men everywhere in labor of hand or head; neither do they spin, as must your wives and daughters and sisters for needed raiment of clothing, and yet I say unto you that "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these beautiful flowers." And if God take care for these in their growth and tenderness and beauty, shall He not take care of you? God's care and wisdom and goodness towards men our Blessed Lord is pressing, and He uses for argument the same care and wisdom and goodness as shown in the growth of the flowers.

Let us also "consider" and learn. That superabundance of 2,500 kinds of flowers in Palestine! The very thought comforts our soul. For if God do so much that seems not actually necessary to please our eye of sense, and to satisfy and uplift our love of beauty, we can feel sure of the thought that the same loving goodness will all the more work to help and guide and save us, and the same Infinite Wisdom will go on to provide things unutterable of brightness and beauty for the higher life coming. When, passing in your carriage by a thatched dwelling of some poor laborer in England, or by the wretched tene-

ment house in a dingy city, you see a flower or plant in the window or at the doorway, what do you argue? That deep and dark penury has not put out all the lights of the soul in that home. That the hard grind of daily toil has not crushed all of the tender and hopeful there. That the earthy and the sensual are not everything in count there; but within are thoughts of the pure and good, outreaching towards the far off, unattained and dim. That the tended plant and growing flower are proofs of some wise planings for life, and some softening touches of goodness in the dwellers in that humble home.

Well, God has provided, botanical science says, 200,000 species of plants in the vegetable kingdom. And thousands upon thousands of them are flowers that are of little use or none at all towards food to eat or raiment to wear. These flowers are set as in the windows and doorway of this lower life of earth of ours, — and it is a poor, humble, and in some sense grinding life of want, too. When ye see them, then, shall ye not argue as before? God's wisdom sets them forth. God's goodness furnishes them in the full measures and running over superfluities of its inherent love. They are suggestive of noble unsatisfiedness. They prophesy of immortality. They shame what is base and narrow and impure. Sweet in fragrance, beautiful to the vision, delicate of texture, they seem nothing short of heavenly messengers to proclaim God's wisdom and goodness, and to uplift, not only the artist and poet and lover of beauty but all who will be grateful for the Divine bounty, to the true, the beautiful, the good and the eternal.

Consider the flowers of the field! The thousands of them that seem useless and unnecessary. Are we tempted to ask, "To what purpose is this waste?" Men asked such a question of old, and among them Judas. And they were rebuked. "Wastes," as we view them, may be really God's precious means of exaltation: His provisions and preparations for heavenly felicities that the eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, nor the mind conceived: His ef-

fusions of bountiful loving kindness that marvelously warm the heart and cheer the soul.

Consider the lilies of the field! Their beauty of form and brilliance of color, surely. But the botanist can tell more. He will explain how in the family of lilies the calyx is not leaf-shaped and green as in other flowers, but as rich in tint and fine of texture as the very petals of the corolla. So that the external robe of the lily is of the same pure fairness and brilliant beauty with the precious flower enclosed within. And, as the Master said, God so clothed it, this grass of the field. Outwardly and inwardly wanting nothing in charm of color and exquisite delicacy of shape; and so elegantly arrayed of nature that Solomon in all his artificial glory could not surpass it. When the Master, without whom was not anything made that was made, said this, see you not that He knew that the botanist would find in the image employed a deeper truth than even the pleasing one that we ordinary folk perceive?

Consider the flowers of the field! “The proper study of mankind is man”, insists a didactic poet. But even he would grant that the study of flowers and love of flowers may minister lessons sweet and precious for man’s life and happiness. Their humility. They carpet the earth. We tread them down and in the sweetest meekness they resist not the treading. Their obedience and self-forgetfulness. Following the will of their Maker and the law of their being they come forth in blushing beauty spring time after spring time and fade and fall as summer passes. And millions of them so come and blush unseen in the uninhabited stretches of area of our globe. It makes no difference. It is not of themselves they think, but of God, and of growth, and of future life inwrapped in them.

Consider the plants of the field! Their benevolence. Stalks bend under their load of grain, — kernels grown for our sustenance. Vines root themselves in the rockiest and shallowest sorts of soil and suck thereout sweetest juices of grapes, and change dry barrenness into rich verdure.



Leaves by the millions on millions are ever busy in extracting the carbonic acid gas from the atmosphere, changing what would be a noxious vapor to us, out from our air, into the succulent greenness of their own life and the solid woody fiber of structural development.

Consider the growths of the field! Their unselfishness. The leaf is the real life of the field-growth. Roots are necessary of course. And roots draw up nourishment and sap from the soil. But the botanist will tell you how the leaf is the real life. That in the ribs and veins and jointures of the leaf is a miniature conformation of its own tree: and that from it he can divine and reconstruct the tree, as can the anatomist the animal skeleton from the bone. The leaf is lungs and stomach both for the plant. Buds are convoluted leaves. Blossoms and flowers are leaves of finer texture and brighter brilliancy. The branch and trunk of woody fiber is leaves, pressed, concentrated, modified, transmuted. Then the fruit is the arrestment of such leafy growth, and its metamorphosis from a vigorous outputting branch into a rounded juicy pulp. Now bud and blossom, fruit and seed, look to the begetting and sustentation of another life than the plant's own. In the vegetative adding of woody fiber it would be giving to its own growth. What a striking lesson of unselfishness. And proclaimed wherever there are blossomings, and flowerings and fruits. These have come at cost to the plant of giving up its own growth. It has died to itself that it might live for others. Every palatable fruit it has provided for man has grown from its gift of self-sacrifice. Every bud and seed it has furnished for another individual of its species have come from the very sap blood of its existence necessitating the cutting off of its own vegetative development. See in the innumerable growth of the vegetable kingdom therefore the very embodiment of unselfishness which is the life and crown of true religion. And often and often the plant dies its death of self-sacrifice in the act of giving unselfishly blossom and flower and seed for another's life.

Consider the trees of the field! Their patience and endurance. Storms of violence hurl themselves against them. In steady firmness they withstand the onset. They furnish grateful shade to man and beast. They protect our springs and water-courses. They stand guard that the sequestered vales may enjoy perennial peace and shelter. They are sentinels of the centuries. Among living things they are the oldest habitants of our planet. Oaks hundreds of years old, and cypress and yew trees thousands of years old, are breathing by their leafy lungs and rejoicing in their veins of upflowing sap to-day. Patiently and enduringly they have stood in their lot to meet what God appointed. Types of silence and restfulness. Workers, steady and unwearied in developing cell after cell and in repairing waste and depositing growth throughout the countless years. Lessons of strong help to man when restlessness and despair assail.

The tree of life in the midst of the Paradise of Eden! It stood for preciousness and with promising of all that the blessed word life means. Wondering thoughts go back querying what it was and what it had to give. That other tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God! Hoping and trustful hearts out-reach for it. And it is promised to him that overcometh that he shall eat thereof.

Flowers, plants and trees! Ye are exemplifications of God's wisdom and goodness. Ye do your duty well. Your peace is innocence. Your life is purity. Your death is unselfishness. And ye have no stinging self-consciousness of the ill desert of sin imbittering your sap blood as we men have. It's not yours to ask for pardon nor to suffer with remorse. Right cheerily, then, you are ready always, I am sure, to meet and respond to our Benedicite hailing — "O all ye Green things upon the earth, Bless ye the Lord! praise Him and magnify Him forever."